

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2885

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, BG
SUBJ: DACCA UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND BANGLADESH FEDERAL
UNION OF JOURNALISTS MAKE DEMANDS; NON-GAZETTED
GOVERNMENT WORKERS TO STRIKE MAY 9

REF: DACCA 2624

1. ALL DACCA UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS HAVE REPORTEDLY
GOVE ON STRIKE TODAY (MAY 8) TO PRESS DEMANDS FOR THE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW PAY SCALE AND TO PROTEST
CERTAIN RECENT GOVERNMENT AMENDMENTS TO THE 1973
DACCA UNIVERSITY ACT WHICH CURTAIL THE RIGHTS OF FACULTY
MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTION OF DEPARTMENT CHAIR-
MEN AND THE RIGHT TO SELECT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE
UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEES. THE
INSTRUCTORS HAVE FURTHER THREATENED TO RESIGN EN MASSE IF
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THEIR DEMANDS ARE NOT MET BY MAY 14. THE DEMANDED NEW PAY
SCALE IS SEPARATE FROM BUT RELATED TO THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED
PAY SCALES FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. THE UNIVERSITY IS
NOW CLOSED FOR SUMMER HOLIDAY, BUT THE TEACHERS WILL REFRAIN FROM
ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES IMPOSED DURING THE HOLIDAY. IT IS NOT
KNOWN YET WHETHER TEACHERS FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES WILL JOIN
THE STRIKE.

2. IN ANOTHER LABOR DISPUTE, THE BANGLADESH FEDERAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS HAS DEMANDED THAT CERTAIN NEWSPAPERS IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED WAGE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS, ANNOUNCED OVER ONE YEAR AGO ON APRIL 30, 1977. MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING THE BANGLADESH TIMES AND OBSERVER, AND THE INDEPENDENT ITTEFAQ, HAVE IMPLEMENTED THE NEW WAGES, BUT A FEW, INCLUDING THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED SANGBAD, HAVE NOT. OTHER DEMANDS BY THE JOURNALISTS ARE A 35 PERCENT HOUSING ALLOWANCE, PAYMENT FOR NIGHT SERVICE AND A DEMAND TO THE GOVERNMENT TO REMOVE ALL RESTRICTIONS ON THE PUBLICATION OF NEWSPAPERS PREVIOUSLY CLOSED.

3. THE NON-GAZETTED (LOWER LEVEL) GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES MAY 7 THREATENED TO GO ON STRIKE AND TO BLOCK THE MORE SENIOR BUREAUCRATS FROM THE SECRETARIAT BUILDING STARTING MAY 9 IF THE WORKERS' WAGE DEMANDS ARE NOT MET. THE EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN OBSERVING A DAILY TWO HOUR PEN DOWN STRIKE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS (REFTEL). THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC RESPONSE YET FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: THE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE LEVERAGE AT THE MOMENT WITH CLASSES ON SUMMER BREAK, AND THE JOURNALISTS' DEMANDS HAVE NOT YET REACHED THE WORK STOPPAGE STAGE. THE REAL PROBLEM FOR THE BDG IN THESE LABOR DISPUTES, HOWEVER, IS THE RESTLESS MOOD
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WHICH SEEMS TO SPREAD FROM ONE DISSATISFIED GROUP OF WORKERS TO ANOTHER AS LABOR DEMANDS ARE EXPRESSED, AND THE RAPIDLY GROWING SENSE OF FRUSTRATION AMONG WORKERS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, IN BANGLADESH CANNOT HELP PRESIDENT ZIA IN HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGNING. FURTHER COMMENT ON LABOR AND THE ELECTION FOLLOWS SEPTTEL.
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